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QUESTION OF THE VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS IN ANY PART OF THE WORLD

ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS

CIVIL AND POLITICAL RIGHTS

SPECIFIC GROUPS AND INDIVIDUALS

Letter dated 10 April 2002 from the Permanent Representative of China to the United Nations Office at Geneva addressed to the Chairperson of the fifty-eighth session of the Commission on Human Rights

I have the honour to transmit herewith the Position Paper of the Chinese Government on the Issue of Tibet (see annex).

I would be grateful if you could have this letter and its annex* circulated as an official document under items 9, 10, 11 and 14 of the fifty-eighth session of the Commission on Human Rights.

(Signed): SHA Zukang
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

* Reproduced as received in the languages of submission, in Chinese and English only.

Position Paper of the Chinese Government on the Issue of Tibet

Tibet is part of China since ancient times and it was officially incorporated into China during the reign of Yuan dynasty in the early 13th century. Since then, Tibet has been an administrative region directly under the jurisdiction of the Central Government of China. Tibet has never been an independent state and no government in the world has ever recognized it as a state. The People's Republic of China was founded in 1949. In January 1951, agreement was reached by the Central Government and the local authorities of Tibet, which stipulated national regional autonomy would be instituted in Tibet, and that the political system in Tibet as well as the established status, functions and powers of the Dalai Lama and the Bainqen Erdeni should remain unchanged. It also emphasized that the religious beliefs, customs and habits of the Tibetan people must be respected, and the spoken and written language and school education of the Tibetan ethnic group should be developed step by step along with the development of agriculture, livestock raising, industry and commerce and the improvement of the people's living standard. The agreement won the approval and support of the people from all walks of life in Tibet.

In the old Tibet administered by the Dalai Lama, a system of theocracy was in place characterized by the dictatorship of upper-class monk. .nd nobles. At that time, 95% of the Tibetans were serfs and slaves who had no personal freedom at all. Their owners could trade and transfer them, present them as gifts and exchange them, and could arbitrarily carry out such savage and cruel punishments upon them in the owners' private penitentiaries as gouging out the eyes, cutting off ears, hands and feet, pulling off tendons and drowning. Inhumane examples like these could be seen everywhere in Tibet at that time and the feudal

serfdom in Tibet was darker and crueler than that of the Middle Ages in Europe. It is fair to say that the old Tibet witnessed the most serious human rights violations in the twentieth century. To break to chains of slavery, the immense majority of Tibetan serfs earnestly called for democratic reform. However, some members of the Tibetan ruling class dreamed of preserving the serfdom forever so as to maintain their own vested interests and were against any reform. To that end, they plotted armed rebellion in certain areas in a bid to split the motherland. In March 1959, a handful of Tibetan serf-owners, colluding with foreign forces, mounted a general armed rebellion and advocated flagrantly the separatist slogan of "Tibetan independence". With the support and assistance of the broad Buddhist monks and laymen, the rebellion was swiftly stamped out. The Dalai Lama fled the country after the failure of his conspiracy and has since got on the road of confrontation with the Central Government and Tibetan compatriots.

After the Dalai Lama fled in 1959, democratic reform was carried out at the strong request of the broad masses of the people in Tibet and the extremely barbarous serfdom system was abolished. In 1965, the ethic regional autonomy was instituted in Tibet to make it one of the five national autonomous regions at the provincial level in China. The once serfs and slaves under the Dalai's rule became masters of their own destiny. With the help of the Central Government and other regions throughout the country, economy in Tibet boomed and the living standard there improved continuously. At the same time, the ethnic culture, education and public health causes have scored tremendous progresses, and freedom of religious belief and all the fundamental rights and freedoms have been guaranteed to the full. During the 200 years before 1959, the population in Tibet had been around 1 million. By the end of 2000, there were 2.6163 million people in Tibet, of whom 2.4112 million were Tibetans, representing an increase of almost 1.5 times in the 40 years. The average life expectancy in Tibet has risen from 36 years in 1959 to 67 years at present. In the old Tibet, serfs and slaves, accounting for 95% of the population, were illiterates or semi-illiterates and the few schools available were only for the children of noble origin. In contrast,

presently Tibet has established an integrated education system covering from pre-school to higher and professional education. More than 4,300 schools of different categories have been set up. The government has conducted systematic survey, collection, collation, study and publication of the Tibetan cultural heritage and folk arts, and stipulated clearly the learning and use of the Tibetan language and bilingual (Tibetan and Chinese) education. The distinctive Tibetan culture is being further popularized. The Central Government has channeled special appropriations to the maintenance of more than 1,700 monasteries and religious sites including the Potala Palace so as to enable the Tibetans to fully enjoy the freedom of engaging in various religious activities. At present, fresh achievements are being made in the reform and opening-up, economic restructuring and all other social drives in the Tibetan Autonomous Region, which is featured by political stability, economy growth, social progress, ethnic harmony and people living and working in peace and contentment. These constitute sea changes for Tibet. In a short span of only 40 years, Tibet has gone through a social and economic transformation that would normally take centuries for mankind to accomplish. This makes Tibet a region that enjoys the fastest development and biggest improvement in social undertakings and human rights in the world.

As other places in China, the human rights cause in Tibet is developing on a sound track, the Tibetans are satisfied with the development in Tibet. At the same time, the Dalai clique, in order to split the country, deliberately distorts the human rights situation in Tibet to mislead the public opinion and swindle sympathy out of others. The Chinese Government welcomes all unbiased personnel to go to Tibet and see for themselves what is going on in Tibet and draw their objective conclusions.